

Word Sort for Prefixes

This activity is designed to help students see the generative nature of English words. New words are created all the time using familiar combining forms.

Enlarge the word sheet to a full 8 1/2 by 11 size. Make copies for students and have them cut the words apart prior to the lesson. Ask students if they see some words that might go together. Introduce the term **prefix** and ask students to sort the words by the three prefixes (*un-*, *re-*, *dis-*). The results will look something like the sort below. When all the words have been sorted, lead the group in reading each column to be sure they can pronounce the word. Choose several words from the first column (such as *unfair*, *unable*, and *unequal*) and have students tell what they mean. Ask them what the prefix *un-* does to the base word. Repeat this with the other categories. Use the dictionary to establish the meaning of any words that are ambiguous or unclear. Ask students to shuffle the words and resort them into the same three categories. This sort can be entered as a page in their word study notebooks.

On another day, after sorting the words again, ask students to cut off the prefixes and recombine prefixes and base words to form new words. Some possibilities include *recover*, *display*, *reappear*, *unarm*, and *disable*. Ask students to define the new words. Expect disagreement over “real” words. “Is *replug* a word? We can define it.” Keep a dictionary handy to consult. Start a chart of words from the weekly list as well as words students generate. Other prefixes can be explored in a similar fashion and students can be encouraged to look for more examples in their trade books and textbooks.

<u>un-</u>	<u>re-</u>	<u>dis-</u>
unusual	retell	discover
unable	replay	disagree
unfair	review	disgrace
uncover	research	disarm
unequal	reuse	disappear
undress	retrain	disorder
unplug	return	disobey

unfair	retell	disobey
replay	review	discover
unusual	research	disagree
disgrace	uncover	disarm
unequal	reuse	disappear
undress	unplug	retrain
return	disorder	unable